



THE QUILL

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THE FAMILY Elizabeth Sproul

Ron Levin

gathering at fivish

come on in! the party just started;
here—let me hang up your eyes.
see the tall man in the brown coat;
that's jerome. jerry writes plays
(or is it poems? I always forget.)
and over there by the bar is michael;
mickey sculps in stone (or something)
and when he gets lit, he's a *scream*.
the little boy with the beard is jim.
jimmy's working on a novel (I think,
or is it a play?) he's so psychological.

at this, a mermaid leaped from a martini,
the splashes drowning the two nearest men.

ron levin

orchard run

there in the windfall world
you climbed my johnny tree
and apples fell, one by one,
onto the greenwood floor.

and when the birds flew back
at dark—hungry but too late—
they were disappointed to find
only the drops and a few worms.

now spring sits in the crotch
of wet limbs, while overhead
the sky gives up a crop of stars;
the sun screams once and is still.

I thought then that fruit came
all at once in the plop-plop noon,
their red bellies rubbing the limbs;
but now I know the apple is a tease.

ron levin

to avoid children and crowds
I go in the early afternoon
and very slowly choose a seat.
how delightful in the dark
to withdraw, knees to chin,
and fall blindly from the day.
by the usher I am seen only
as a foetus in the seventh row.

then with the first bright pain
I hug myself tightly and grunt.
moving alone as the plot moves,
I slide downward toward ending
and after the popcorn is gone,
give birth to myself on the street.

ron levin

story for march

blustery in a padded chair
an old man in a lesser club
blunders into twilight sleep
with dead cigar in windy lips.

winter goes out now, leaving
ashes that hang on days ends—
ashes that sift and fall upon
a rumpled, dark-brown vest.

after dreams, a guttural entry
as an old throat grumbles once,
and below the thunder regions,
ice breaks up in the Rockies.

again—the rumble that lures
whitetail down from the Blue Ridge
to feed timidly under warm rain;
the snow turns black in the cities.

spring steams on a muddy table
as violets toss themselves
into dark salads and cluster
where the shadows are rocks.

now a page boy prods the room
with green voice and wet hands,
announcing to the gentlemen, that
if they please, life is served.

ron levin

What's Wrong With the American Woman?

—The American Man

SALLIE McSWAIN

In the August, 1957, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* Don Cortes presents his views that "the trouble with the American woman is simply that she is brought up on milk." Absolutely absurd! He points out that since the turn of the century the American woman has developed a voracious taste for milk. Because of milk's high calcium content, the result has been an elongation of the female body. Woman is no longer a broad-hipped, short-legged species with "lush baroque contours which Man has found so irresistible." The milk diet that brought on her changes has defeminized woman, and she is replacing man and, he says, running society. Three questions immediately arise. Is she with her slim silhouette any less resistible today? Is it her diet that has transformed her figure? And what is the trouble with woman, anyway?

An emphatic *no* answers the first two questions. It certainly does not appear that she is less resistible because of her slenderness. There are few men indeed who do not have the latest pin-ups cut from the pages of *Playboy*, *Esquire*, or *Frost*. Few men prefer a life-long existence away from women, for even those without permanent female companionship manage to acquire several lady-friends whose company they enjoy.

The answer to the second question is that diet has not been the one deciding factor in altering woman's figure. Her whole environment has caused this change. Too, evolution of the human being is continuing from the stooped Neanderthal man, and this evolution will continue so long as man is on earth. The species of man is not static; so it cannot be said that woman is changing just because she is a milk-drinker.

Furthermore, the trouble with woman, Mr. Cortes states, is that "she has become the mistress of the purse, the arbiter of taste, the umpire of consumption . . . For, having tried on Adam's clothes, Eve has decided to try on the rest. American man didn't have much choice in the matter." Actually it is the American man who brought on the whole thing. Woman is human and has been since her existence in the Garden of Eden. She was not created as a slave. But for centuries she was compelled to be man's slave, and now that she has broken from that ball and chain, man finds her a threat to his hallowed superiority. An interesting paradox arises at this point. Even though man complains that woman "has become the mistress of the purse, the arbiter of taste, the umpire of consumption," he is more than willing to have her relieve him of these responsibilities. The "mistress of the purse" owns three-quarters of America's assets. Man doesn't strenuously object, for he bestows his wealth upon her. In addition, she has had to work, since man found her capable of supplementing his income so he could have time to indulge in pleasures. Among these pleasures are luxuries he invests in and hides behind the term, "It's for my wife." No, it is not she who spends the evening before the TV set,

but the gentleman of the household, for she is busy with the children and with planning a week-end party for her husband's boss and his wife.

If woman is the "arbiter of taste" and the "umpire of consumption," it is man who is profiting from it. He is the designer, the manufacturer, and the salesman. He uses every possible trick to tempt woman into his greedy trap of materialism. Not only is this true, but also her husband finds relief from his guilt complex that has been brought about by the position man has forced upon woman for centuries. When he indulges her, it is because he is eying satisfaction for himself. If woman is the "umpire of consumption," it is because she has been forced into that position. She must dress acceptably, furnish her home attractively, and dress her husband presentably—he seldom buys sock and ties without consulting her—that is, if she does not shop for him alone since he is too busy at the office to go downtown during store hours. She herself must be attractive and her home must be in good taste, for her spouse's prestige and his job would be in peril if she grew careless. Man, therefore, profits not only from the producing end, but just as much from the consuming end since woman is the "arbiter of taste" and the "umpire of consumption."

Mr. Cortes is indeed short-sighted and illogical when he proclaims that the American woman has brought her new position and prestige upon herself, and when he announces that the cause is her craving for milk. No, whatever may be wrong with the American woman has nothing at all to do with herself. The whole trouble is the American man.

Poem

SUZANNE CARRUTHERS

I heard you say
"I love you". . .
Your voice was smooth,
still.
Now you are gone
And I remember
your kiss
your slight smile,
All this was mine
Forever—
Never.

I heard you say
"I love you". . .
The still voice
echoes
on

George Williams: Some of My Best Friends Are Professors

ANN WILDER

Students and professors, as well as the rest of the college community, will enjoy reading *Some of My Best Friends Are Professors*, George Williams's critical commentary on higher education in America. The author, a professor of some merit for the past thirty years, feels well qualified to present his examination of the university system at the risk of losing some of his "best friends" as mentioned in the title of his work.

Professor Williams begins by accusing the American university of failing to reach its own academic standards. To validate this observation, he refers to the large number of students who drop out of universities, once having been admitted. Those who meet the criteria for success in the eyes of the university constitute only ten to fifteen per cent of the total admissions. Williams puts the blame on the university itself, which he proceeds to examine more closely in turning to the faculty. His lively descriptions of professorial types run the gamut from the intellectual snob to the campus politician. Most of these prototypes have a common fault: they are poor teachers. The author rounds out this subject by describing what qualities are found in a good teacher.

The university, according to Williams, has attempted to remedy its problems by superficial means which do not reach the core of the problem—the professor and his classroom. Furthermore, he feels that as educational methods, these remedies are not keeping pace with the changing times.

The author hits another aspect of the university: its system of admissions. He sums up college entrance tests as unpredictable and unreliable. Too much importance, he feels, is attached to their results, since the tests can determine reliably only those who are very bright. Consequently, some students who are capable of college work are being rejected because their scores happen to fall below the set norm. This is a waste of talent and potential ability which America cannot afford to lose, according to Williams.

As colleges and universities continue to grow, they should, the author believes, face up to the basic reality that

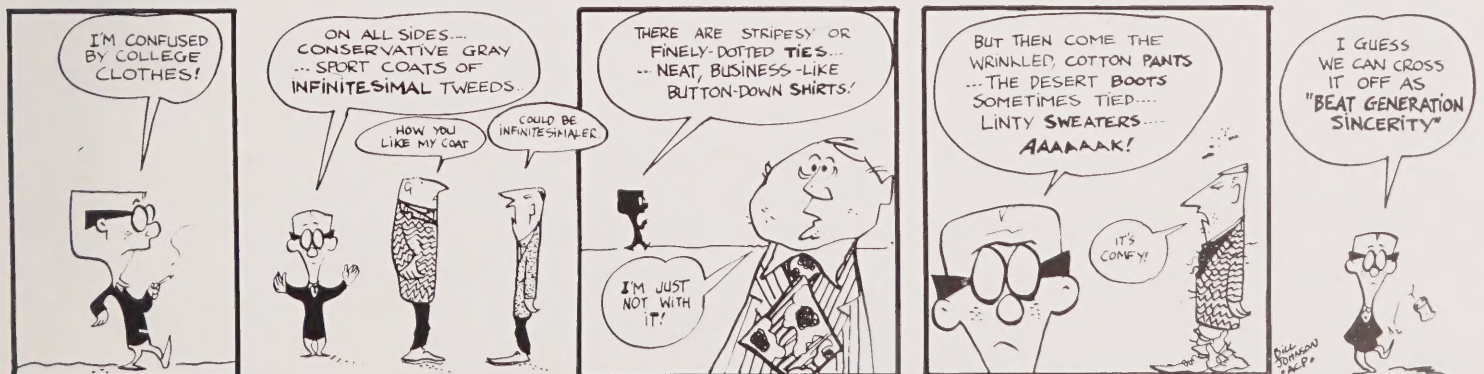
"students . . . are not learning as they should; and the teacher is at fault." This is the point of the author's attack. He goes on to propose some general remedies: the professor must concern himself with trying to teach well, attempting to impart a "delight in learning" to his students; the university must apply self-criticism constantly and must also provide the opportunity for higher education to a wider range of people.

Despite its broad generalizations and sweeping criticisms, George Williams's analysis of the university system contains some uncomfortable elements of truth: students are *not* learning as they should; professors are *not* teaching as the author feels they should; the attempted remedies are *not* succeeding as they should. But whether or not the university should emphasize teaching to a greater degree is the main point of debate. Professor Williams advocates this point through good-natured criticism in this interesting and informative book.

Evanishment

HARRIET HOUSTON

Order evolves into chaos,
Creation crumbles,
Time's cycle stops,
Sighs,
Then silently spins on.



Archibald MacLeish: J. B.

In this tragedy in blank verse Archibald MacLeish tries to ascribe meaning to life in the twentieth century by drawing a parallel between modern man and the Biblical Job. He uses a form reaching back to Greek drama, while employing modern situations and characters to carry out his theme. The modern Job is a successful businessman blessed with a wife who loves him and a lovely family. He leads a rich, full life and is indeed a righteous man.

Many of the elements of Greek tragedy are evident in the play: the play is written in blank verse; it is almost ceremonial in nature; there is a great amount of repetition for didactic emphasis. In one scene when the children are dead, we see Sarah repeating their names over and over like a person who is counting:

Sarah: David . . . Jonathan . . . Mary . . . Ruth . . .

I cannot say the last.

J.B.: Rebecca

Sarah: David . . . Jonathan . . . Mary . . . Ruth . . .

J.B.: You didn't find . . . there wasn't . . .

Sarah: David . . . Jonathan . . . Mary . . . Ruth . . .

This repetition presents a very stylized example of the despair and helplessness she feels in the face of a force which controls her fate, a force which she cannot comprehend or control.

Nickles and Zuss perform the function of a Greek chorus. In the beginning of the play they present the problem around which the play revolves: Will Job, a righteous man, multiply blessed by God, remain faithful to God even if he should lose all that God has bestowed upon him. Scenes are presented as the plot unfolds. Nickles and Zuss remain always present commenting upon and interpreting the action that takes place with J. B. and his family.

The characters are portrayed in a very stylized way. There is no great psychological development. Each person in the play represents a universal and can hardly exist as an individual apart from the context of the drama. Zuss is only believable inasmuch as he fulfills the function of being a mortal personification of the majesty and righteousness that a God would be expected to be. Likewise, Nickles possesses a taunting evil nature. J. B. is sketchy unless seen as a representation of modern man. The characters are presented in only the dimensions which MacLeish deems necessary to carry out the theme of his play. They have no other apparent functions in life other than the ones in which MacLeish pictures them.

The verse sustains the mood of tragedy through its rhythm. It is a prodding, relentless rhythm keeping constant the relentless action of tragedy upon J. B. Through this rhythm the reader is carried steadily, at an even pace, through the drama. There is none of the great variation one might expect to find in a romantic poem or undisciplined writer; this verse is disciplined and restrained. This mode of presentation enhances the elevated stylized form which MacLeish has chosen to use in this drama.

The theme of the play is introduced by Nickles and Zuss, two actors out of work, who wander onto a deserted set and take up masks of Satan and God respectively. They present the wager made between God and Satan both in Biblical and modern terms. Who would not, says Nickles in effect, love God in the face of all such blessings as have been bestowed upon J. B. Put him to the test and he will denounce God as would any infidel. J. B., however, realizes that he has been blessed through no deserving on his part:

. . . I don't deserve it.

It's not a question of deserving . . .

Nobody *deserves* it, Sarah:

Not the world that God has given us.

But I believe in it, Sal. I trust in it.

I trust my luck—my life—our life—

God's goodness to me.

Suddenly and senselessly J. B. is robbed of all that he has. His children are taken away from him in meaningless tragedies. At first Job is relentless in his praise of God; always he acknowledges Him. Still he says, "God is just." But J. B. is thinking in terms of crime and punishment. He becomes bewildered. There must be guilt, he feels, and he searches blindly for the reason for his adversity.

What *I can't* bear is the blindness—

Meaninglessness—the numb blow

Fallen in the stumbling night.

Finally, in his despair he asks, "What have I done?" Then Bildad and Eliphaz come to him and tell him he must repent. He must accept whatever befalls him and love God still. J. B. says he would rather suffer

. . . every unspeakable suffering God sends,

Knowing it was I that suffered,

I that earned the need to suffer . . .

"Teach me my sin," he cries. But Zophar says that one need not name the sin to know the need to be forgiven. And, finally, J. B. can bow his head and say, "I abhor myself . . . and repent. . . ."

Thus Job's fate is justified not by the will of God, but by "Job's acceptance of God's will." Job has understood and forgiven and repented. He has continued to love God even in the face of adversity. And he is rewarded by having all returned to him and more, as was the case in the life of the Biblical Job.

MacLeish very effectively presents his treatise. We are given a clear picture of modern man and his struggle to find some meaning in his existence. For MacLeish the answer is love, undying and unfaltering love, regardless of what fate may befall the individual. Love is the only gift that man can give to God, while God gives all to man. By stripping the drama of all elements extraneous to the central theme MacLeish very adroitly gives us what may be the best answer to modern man's quest for meaning in his life; it is certainly a good answer.

ANITA SUE COHEN

Fraternal Fools

Many changes have taken place on Queens College campus in the last four years, but perhaps the changes which have affected the student body most significantly are those which have occurred within the fraternal system. The most evident change perhaps has been simply the increased emphasis that has been placed upon sororities.

The so-called image of oneself—the concept a person has of who she is on this campus—seems to have become dependent to a large extent on the particular sorority to which she belongs. Perhaps it would not be an understatement to suggest that the majority of Queens students think of themselves first as members of their sorority and second as students of Queens College. Sororities have thus become the most dominant power structure on our campus.

There is no other group on campus which wields as much power and dictates as much authority on as many people as the combined groups of sorority members at Queens, for no other group on campus is as resistant to challenge, questioning, and criticism as these groups. It is an intricate web in which criticism has little place, because it tends to be taken as a reflection on the group of which the criticizer is a member. Thus, as a rule, the fraternal groups are apprehensive—and defiant—in the face of criticism.

Any system which maintains such power should constantly be evaluated in order that the overall framework in which it functions may serve the interests of the people within it. It is my purpose to undertake such an evaluation in the hope that it will be beneficial to the student body of our campus.

First of all, I would have to credit sororities with providing opportunities for friendship and “group experiences,” which have proved very meaningful to many of the students at Queens. At least, I have found this to be true in my own case, for many of my happiest experiences at Queens have been made possible through my sorority.

However, although I have in fact found sororities beneficial in providing opportunities for friendship and group experiences, nevertheless I would very seriously question the fundamental principles on which the fraternal system is based. Essentially, sororities are selfish endeavors in which “the group” works primarily for the perpetuation of itself. A sorority is designed almost exclusively for the benefit of its own members, and each of its members, as a member, is primarily concerned with getting the best desserts for her sorority. And it is often a very subtle fact that the all-important criterion for the selection of new members is: What can this person do for our group? Perhaps this is the wrong fundamental basis for friendship and group experience.

Furthermore, there seems to me to be no necessary relationship between a sorority sister and a friend. It seems a somewhat immature attitude for a person to feel that another person must be a sorority sister for friendship to be at its best. There is perhaps a subtle something working within us that demands us to have a “reason” (i.e., sorority and its responsibilities of friendship) for developing a true friend-

ship. There seems to me to be something basically wrong in this assumption. People are free to become involved in the enterprise of friendship. To demand an excuse for pursuing friendship is deeply superficial. This in a sense is relying on another person's sense of obligation to accept us because we are her sorority sisters. This mutual facade of obligation is an easy thing to hide behind. It seems to me that this has consistently occurred on our campus and that friendships have been subtly restricted as a result.

It seems to me, furthermore, that too often the sorority member is important to her group *as a member* of the group—not for herself; she is important because she is a member of the group, rather than because of her uniqueness as a person. There seems to be a violation in the fundamental importance of a person *as a person*, and the person essentially has become a “thing.” Perhaps the system can be a barrier in accepting a person in his wholeness, uniqueness, and mystery.

An evaluation should also be made of the time element involved in sorority activities. True, one might argue, the person accepts certain obligations which require time when she joins a sorority. But there is a limit when it reaches the point of enslavement. It is somewhat overwhelming to consider the amount of time that is consumed by sorority meetings, sorority projects, sorority sings and sorority sing practices, sorority basketball games, sorority initiations, and sorority rush weeks and their preparation. One question that arises to my mind is: Are these activities gratifying *in themselves*, or are they simply tolerated as *means* for the perpetuation and extension of the group and its influence? The fact that practically all sorority activities have been made compulsory seems somewhat indicative that the activities are not gratifying in themselves. It is ironical that in many cases heavy fines must be paid when meetings and activities are not attended. The compulsory nature of meetings and activities seems also to indicate that individuals would not voluntarily choose to attend them. And, if this is true, is there any particular reason why they should be forced to do so? Such is demanded by the system. I doubt that there is any other group or structure on our campus that could wield this sort of control or demand this sort of unchallenged devotion.

Learning, in a broad sense, should be the central aim of any college. Many extracurriculars in some way have supplemented the interest in learning on our campus. However, for some reason I have failed to discover where sororities in any way foster or supplement learning. To the contrary, their time-consuming activities inevitably bite into the academic program. Invariably it is the area of studies from which time is subtracted.

On a campus the size of Queens, I wonder exactly what the function of sororities is. Queens prides itself as being a small college which “aims to accomplish some of those things which can be done only in a small college. Its aim is that each student shall be known by name, face, [and sorority] by *all* other students and by all members of the faculty.”

(Apologies to *Queens College Bulletin*.) If one of Queens' primary characteristics is that it is a small college in which the students can be a unified group, why must this potential unity be thwarted by sorority rivalry? The fact that sororities have immeasurably broken up the unity of the campus seems almost too obvious to need mentioning. Perhaps some of the most vital aspects of a small college have been sacrificed because of this disunity.

The effect of sororities on freshmen should be evaluated. While living in the freshman dormitory for the last two years, I have found it quite clear and obvious that during the first six weeks of orientation to the college, everything has pointed *directly* to rush week. I am somewhat appalled that the college community has been unable to impart any of the more vital features that are usually regarded as distinctive of college life. It consequently surprises me very little when occasionally upperclassmen lament the fact that Queens is a finishing school. What else could be expected from such an orientation?

I wonder if prospective students are aware of the fact before their arrival on campus that they will not be allowed to talk with upperclassmen for the first six weeks of school? This *literally* has been the case. Perhaps it would be fairer to inform them of this fact before they arrive. However, I hasten to comment that although this is bad, in the freshman dormitory it has proved better than allowing sorority women freedom to speak and associate with freshmen before rush week. When given the freedom to do so, they too often talk with them, not because they are interested in them as persons, but because they want them in their group. Some freshmen are pursued—some are left alone. Hard feelings are inevitably generated among rival upperclassmen. As a result, competing sororities maliciously criticize each other for being "too friendly," and there is a battle royal. Such is the dilemma, and the campus is broken into many factions.

After six weeks of school rush parties give the freshmen and upperclassmen their first real opportunity to talk together freely. Nevertheless, it is indeed an awkward situation, for the rushees know that they are under scrutinous inspection—and indeed, they are. It all seems a game which must be played according to its rules. Everyone must pretend: everyone must be nice, must be friendly, must smile, must gloat over the rushees. But smiles can be taken off and the inspection team can begin comparing notes once the door is shut behind the uncertain freshmen. I would like very much to be convinced that this is more—or less—than a glorious game.

One other observation that I have made is that after rush week, freshmen tend to *regroup* themselves into sorority groups in the dorms and on the campus. Moreover, they tend to group themselves around the upperclassmen within their sorority and make relatively few contacts with upperclassmen outside their group. Thus often they limit themselves somewhat to associations with a very few people. But is this surprising when they have not been able to get to know other upperclassmen before becoming associated with a particular group? Thus only *after* they have identified with a group do they have the opportunity to move freely within the structure of the campus. And, once they have identified with a particular group, they are "tagged" and their freedom is subtly restricted. Is it any wonder that "our small campus" is disunited by groups which are concerned primarily about their own interests and consider their interests more important than the interests of the student body

or of the school as a whole? And is it any wonder that there is an appalling lack of Queens spirit, when there is no freedom to do things together as a student body until after rush week and after the campus has been divided into sorority groups?

Sorority rush is based essentially on the survival of the fittest. The most basic principle on which it operates is that of exclusiveness which prevails in the disguise of selectivity. Many people are excluded (either from every sorority or from some of them), and often the standards by which they are accepted or rejected are wholly out of line with what a college—and especially a Christian college—represents. I see no justice in a campus structure which excludes a part of the students from what has apparently inauspiciously become one of the most vital aspects of our Christian college. Perhaps it is not one of our functions as a Christian college community to provide a structure which encourages the acceptance rather than the rejection of persons?

In this evaluation I have made an honest effort not to exaggerate the situation. Furthermore, I am not attempting to say—or to imply—that sororities have not done many commendable things. They have—but I wonder if it has been *because of* or *in spite of* the system. I am not in any way convinced that the good that they do could not be done better through other means. I am suggesting that the opportunities that are offered by sororities should be based on sounder fundamental principles than the fraternal system can provide.

My interest is only that the structure of the campus should serve the best interests of the students and of the college community. I believe that the present structure has become so ingrained, rigid, and resistant to criticism and change that it has taken advantage of the individuals within it and that they are enmeshed in a web too intricate for them to untangle themselves. Nevertheless, perhaps the time has come for us to find a structure which will more adequately meet our needs—one which will foster a climate of cooperation rather than of malicious competition, will foster an atmosphere of acceptance rather than of rejection, and will promote rather than impede the progress of learning.

JANE KLUTTZ

Tempo

HARRIET HOUSTON

It's almost closing time at the . . .
Last chance to buy ya week-end . . .
Ya gotta rush, hurry, run!
Just imagine being without ya . . .
So ya better rush, hurry, run!
Get ya escape from the col' cruel world.
Rush, hurry, run!
It's almost closing time at the . . .
So rush, rush,
hurry, hurry,
run!

Hey buddy,
Where ya going?
I reckon nowhere . . .



MEDITATION . . .

Susan Davis

Gray Town

MARY STENHOUSE

On the way to and from somewhere is a gray town.

I passed through the town on my way to somewhere,
And winter had come before me,
Leaving grayness in its wake.

And I saw the unpainted houses, and the toppled chimneys,
And the ragged children, playing under the shadow
Of a sky overcast.

When next I saw the town, spring had come before me,
Flashing brilliance into the yards of old houses.
Red, gold, and purple in the yards of old houses.

Yet the unpainted houses were no less unpainted,
The toppled chimneys, no less toppled,
The ragged children, no less ragged.

A gray town, no less gray,
 On the way
 To and from somewhere.

"Paradise Lost"

(thanks to Milton)

ALITA WHITE

The likeness of your face
to others seen in time
is great. Yet, long the pace
is set between the rhyme
 which your love speaks
 and those another wreaks
upon my once complacent heart.

Th' occasion of your taste
to touch my own is rare
indeed. But still, the waste
of lonely days I bear,
 and shall I hide
 a love which you deride
with silence sifting days apart.

Poem

SUZANNE CARRUTHERS

I.

I do not understand you,
But your eyes
Beckon me
Into silent darkness.

I shall not give myself to you,
But your knowing
Smile tells me
I lie.

I will never have you
To own, to hold—
You must be a dream,
And dreams fade.

You are a mystery to me.
I only know your name
Though all be against me,
This I do know:
I love you . . .

but I do not understand.

II.

The sun was hot,
We said good-bye,
then it grew cold

My heart said
There was nothing left,
still the flame burns.

Miles apart,
Soul and spirit gone,
days move on endlessly.

An empty shell,
my mind groping,
again searching for life.

Love and life
decaying slowly
like the gnarled oak

Good-bye—
You will never know,
I have yet to understand

Despair

CAROLYN DOWNER

Must every day be not unlike today—
To hope, to work, to try, to fear, and fail?
Should time pass by in only sad dismay—
To love, to strive, and seek—to no avail?
How long can one keep up such heavy pace—
With naught but dread to meet the coming hour?
Are dreams but made to dream, and ne'er to face
The sweetness of reality's great power?
Can man have faith whose eyes see naught but sin?
Can one have hope there'll be a brighter day?
When these are lost, should one again begin
To seek new hope—only to lose the way?
If fate should always speak with such foul breath,
The only way to peace would be but death.

Sonnet I

MARILYN HACKETT

Our love has been a tardy-blooming flower:
Though sown in April, it lay blind and dumb
While seasons fled, unconscious of its power
To make two hearts to its perfume succumb.
Another April came, and passed without
A sign that spring's sweet rains had kissed the blight
So long imposed on earth by winter's drought
And loosed the tiny spear to strain toward light.
But May's warm hint of early summer's heat
Brought prematurely forth one tight-curved bud,
And such a tender welcome did it meet
That soon it bared its folds to sunlight's flood,
Revealing beauty that will not subside
Though plucking of the bloom is long denied.

Sonnet V

MARY STENHOUSE

Must I, who for a moment take your hand,
And gently smooth the worry from your brow,
Be slave forever to your fond command,
And you, the starveling beggar of my vow?
Is not the moment in itself replete—
Sufficient for what may or may not be;
Must you demand that I be indiscreet,
Responding to your most ingenious plea?
This moment not in time is set apart,
As one unique, and likewise I resolve
To set a watch upon my eager heart,
Lest I profess the vow that time absolve.
Yet, there is in this moment, I confess,
Suggestion that I love you—more or less.

Sonnet I

AMELIA ALEXANDER

If you should come to me in April's youth
When Spring's blithe soul will rouse the dormant earth
Again, and with her miracle of birth
Renew the hope of man,—if then in truth
You came, forgetting all your pride, and made
Confession of your love for me and told
Me how you could no longer hide nor hold
It in your heart nor could no more evade—
Then, like all nature stilled by winter's blast
When kissed by spring-winds comes to life at last
To awe the world with green-gold burst of bloom,
My heart will, joyous, turn upon its gloom,
Released from stifling, blue-white ice of pride,
And blossom with the love it now must hide.

Sonnet II

AMELIA ALEXANDER

Yet if you choose to wait a while before
You recognize your love for me, and go
Instead along your way, I somehow know
That you will not be gone for evermore,
Lured on in search of life by ocean's roar
To distant lands of charm and brilliant glow;
Nor will you always, ever wander so
As now you, restless, roam from shore to shore.
No, if you must, then go: I understand;
My love for you is strong and will withstand
The doubts and fears that time will bring my way.
Because I know and trust that when some day
These splendid fires no longer brightly burn
You will remember me and then return.

The Art Of Criticism

JANE KLUTTZ

Within each of us there is a nagging sense of inadequacy and a feeling that everything we have carefully constructed over the years is a house made of cards which might be blown down by a hostile breath of air. Perhaps this stems from a feeling of unworthiness which comes when we honestly compare ourselves with what we ought to be. Or perhaps it stems from a feeling of self-righteousness that blinds us to the creative aspects of criticism. In either case, when criticism fails to make us re-examine ourselves, we are indeed beyond almost any kind of help.

Constructive criticism is an important element of the academic community. It is a useful and valuable tool in the search for better and better ways of doing things, and, indeed, it is a useful tool in the search for what we call truth. However, far more is involved in constructive criticism than just the matter of good ideas or good arguments. Effective criticism depends to a large extent on *how* we criticize, *why* we criticize, and *what* we criticize.

In the first place, criticism is effective only when it is actually conveyed to and accepted by people. It must be conveyed to people who probably have ideas of their own (and probably have a perfectly good right to their own opinions). Also, the criticism must be accepted by the person, and most people are resistant to change. The critic may have the best ideas in the world, but unless he is willing to help the person accept the better ideas and better ways of doing things, he is wasting his time. Perhaps this can be done most effectively, not by assuming that the other person is wrong and that I, the critic, am right—and by telling him so, but rather by subtly directing the person in his own thinking so that he feels that he has made his own changes, rather than had them imposed on him from without. Perhaps this way the critic won't have the satisfaction of his opponent's feeling defeated or obligated to him for showing him a better way. Nevertheless, results can be accomplished this way—because both parties are participating in the endeavor. Barriers in communication are not then such a problem, because both persons are willing to think together on the matter at hand. Of course, the critic must sacrifice to the extent that his ideas are no longer his possession—they no longer have his name attached to them, but rather they become the joint possession of both parties. He may never have the feeling that he has made his point. Instead, the ideas stand on their own—and are objectively evaluated by both sides.

Secondly, just what are the things which motivate us to criticize? Criticism almost always involves some clash with

other people. When this is true, just why are we so anxious to throw our criticisms around? I think I could speculate fairly accurately that a large percentage of our criticism is done for the sole purpose of hearing ourselves talk. Sometimes this falls under the simple category of gripes—criticism which in all probability would not have been expressed if the person really thought he was being heard by those responsible. And sometimes we actually do feel what we are saying, but we are saying it primarily for the purpose of being *noticed* rather than of trying actually to accomplish something constructive. And there are, perhaps, occasions when we are, consciously or unconsciously, simply fighting other people. There are also times when we unconsciously build ourselves up by tearing others down. It is perhaps useful to stop and consider whether or not our true motives are worthy and whether or not we can control our own emotions and our self-interest.

It is very interesting—and revealing—to note just what things a person criticizes. What are the things that a person will take his time and energies to try to change? Are the things that stir us up trivial, or are they significant enough to demand our energies? If they are important and worth our efforts, then let us consider constructive criticism.

But if we proceed to criticize, let us at least be sensitive to the *feelings* of those we criticize (or those whose ideas we criticize). For our criticism will certainly not be worth the effort if in the process we cause unnecessary injury to other persons.

Effective criticism usually depends on a willingness of both parties to compromise. The criticized must be amenable to new ideas; the critic must be sympathetic to the feelings of the criticized; both must look at the situation objectively. More especially, when both the critic and the criticized can forget *themselves* and their own interests, perhaps criticism can be one of the most creative endeavors we can undertake.

The Lonely Night

SUSAN BURNS

She lay in bed and stared into the darkest corner of the room. Every crack in the paint was well known to her. She had watched the spider web in the corner collect dust for months, but it was too dark now to see it. The bed was narrow and the sheets were cool when she moved her feet.

Here she had been protected for many years. Contact with the outside world had been limited. Many days had passed when she had not even seen a newspaper. Tomorrow this security would be torn from her. She would no longer know the routine of the days here. The room would remain unchanged, but she would be gone. Tomorrow she would graduate from college.

The Letter

MARY ALLRED

That morning for the first time in a long while Janice was glad to be alive. It didn't matter that the sky was dark or that great gray streaks of rain were falling. It was lovely rain!—long arrows of crystal that broke into a million sparkling shivers on the earth. The fire in the fireplace gleamed and danced. She watched, soaking up the warmth. It was almost as warm as his voice.

"Eight o'clock, then," he had said yesterday. She played with the words, feeling their richness. She had all day to cling to their warmth. Why, she could conquer worlds! It wasn't that it had been a long time since she had heard a deep voice or warm words. She heard them often. After all, she was a girl who had never had to beg for attention—everyone said so. It was just that it had been so many months since a warmth of any kind had thawed the smallest icicle of that terrible chill inside her. She danced about the room. Perhaps she would let it all melt now, at last—slowly, of course, but still perhaps she would.

"Jan, do you think you could care at all?" She rolled the words around in her heart. No ice fence could bear their warmth long. Yes, she would let herself care. You couldn't make a hermit of yourself. It was just a bad thing that had happened. Nobody's fault, really. Maybe hers most of all because she had been so blind. Wasn't that what everyone said? Maybe she should have listened. All these long, chill days at work, the dull clinks of the typewriter, the lone coffee breaks, that coldness hoarded up in her heart—defense mechanisms, isn't that what they are called? Nobody could blame her. Those glances that said "Poor Janice"—how she hated them! She'd show them she was no softie. And she'd never, *never* let it happen again. That's the way her mind had been working. Now perhaps it was going to work differently. Hadn't it been different all morning?

... "Really, Joe, I don't know whatever has gotten into you. Of course, I couldn't care, not at all."

"There's plenty of time; you're something of a cynic, you know. Just try, Jan; please try."

Today was her day off. She would keep busy, and she'd think. She had to decide whether to let all the icicles melt or whether to keep some there—just in case. Really, Joe was too dear for words. He would never hurt her—would never hurt anyone if he could help it. He was everything, wasn't he, that she had always wanted? Such a sweet person—and so strong. Eyes like blue bits of sky, that strong face ... But dear heaven! She couldn't let herself think like this yet. This was asking for it.

She picked up her coffee cup and the saucer and went

into the kitchenette. She washed the dishes and set them into the drain and watched them sparkle while the drops rolled off. The drops dried quickly, like tears in the beams of a smile. She walked back into her room. Dear fathers! Was that Janice Kelly staring at her from the mirror? She actually had light in her eyes.

... "I know I shouldn't do or say anything to commit myself yet, but I swear I'd make you happy, Jan, if you'd give me a chance. You can always know that with me it would be for always." She waltzed across the room and sat down at her desk. This was a perfect day to organize all her materials, to straighten the desk drawers. She felt new energy pouring into her body; it musn't go to waste.

She opened the first drawer and began to sort its contents, then the second drawer, then the third. Bills, bank statements—these would have to be kept. Stationery, clippings, paper clips, index cards—that was almost all. How short the job had seemed! She picked up an old paperweight and polished it on her housecoat. Little stars gleamed off its glass surface; they looked like drops of dew on the rose inside. A snapshot of her parents—they would like Joe if they were living. An old letter ...

Strange. She laughed a nervous laugh that sounded hollow in the solitude of the apartment. She thought she'd gotten rid of all those relics ... this must have been an oversight. Surely she had never, not even subconsciously, wanted to save the thing. She felt a little chill go over her. Maybe the fire was getting low. She fidgeted with the envelope. She'd just throw it away, right now, into the fire. Right where it belonged. Better not to conjure up ghosts. Still, it couldn't hurt anything, not with this new warmth. She was safe at last; she could laugh at her old bitterness. Perhaps it would be a pleasant feeling to compare Murray with Joe. Joe was so *fine*. But hadn't she always thought Murray *fine*? But it couldn't harm anything—after all, she was going to let the ice melt! She unfolded the letter.

... and Jan, ten years from now I will love you still, only more. I think you know there can be no one else for me; please don't ever doubt that. I live to make you mine. You know, I think it is a rare thing for a man to love like this. I will do everything I can to make you happy—this is my pledge to you ... you can always know that with me it will be for always ...

She looked across the room. She tried to find in her mind the blue of Joe's eyes, their warmth; all she could see were discs of midnight caught in a sun-browned face. They shot sparks that were tongues of fire. She saw them glide through the air, turning white, crystallizing, becoming spears of ice that painlessly entered her breast. When she found the blue eyes again, they were doing the same thing. Oh God, why did they have to do that too? Warm flames that changed into frost. She glanced down at her left hand. It was still there, just a faint, faint circle, a tenth of a degree lighter than the rest of her skin, marking the third finger like a scar—a band of snow.

She picked up the letter and put it on the last coals of the fire and watched it blaze into a white flame. She rearranged the top of her desk precisely and put it in office-like order. Then she walked toward the kitchen to prepare a cold lunch. On the way she passed the mirror, and its only reflection was her frozen smile.

A Modest Proposal—

with Apologies to Jonathan Swift

SALLY ANDERSON

Having been fortunate enough to be a member for the past year and a half of the student body of Ivy Hall, a small, select, liberal arts college for girls, I have become increasingly aware of some of the formidable problems which beset the field of higher education. Chief among the ones which have come to my attention is the presence of a frivolous attitude among students toward the serious occupation of becoming educated and cultured young women. This lack of dedication to the real purpose of attending college has resulted in somewhat of an apathy toward the desire prevalent among educators that students be present in class with unflinching regularity. At times this apathy amounts almost to an aversion, and sometimes even culminates in the wilful absence of a student from a class. The ensuing indignation of the faculty and administration is quite understandable, for not only do such misdemeanors deprive the absentee of an hour's display of the professor's knowledge, but they also are very detrimental to the self-esteem of faculty members. I believe the latter is due to a misconception on the part of some of the faculty that these absences indicate the students are not completely enthralled during their tri-weekly lectures. This belief is absolutely erroneous, as many of my classmates have attempted to explain to them. In reality, the hours spent in absence from class are frittered away in gay revels at various men's campuses surrounding Ivy Hall. This is hardly beneficial to one's scholastic progress, but in no way approaches the gravity of the other charge.

The whole situation I have described quite naturally generates friction in the otherwise amiable relationship between faculty and students and further inhibits the progress of education. I have long thought that anyone who could devise a more business-like system of administering college programs and thereby could instill a more serious attitude in college students would deserve a bronze plaque in some conspicuous location recognizing him as a benefactor of the country. I myself have thoughtfully formulated a few ideas concerning such a system. Although I realize that my suggestions would require the skill of a more learned, experienced person to be perfected and worked out, I believe that there are several advantages in them which will be evident.

"I shall now humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection."¹

Lately I have read articles by eminent psychologists stating that the necessity of sleep is highly over-rated, since it is merely a habit. In view of this, "I do therefore humbly offer it to consideration,"² that the school day be increased

an hour in duration each year beginning with the first grade; that the hours of sleep at night be cut down proportionately until pupils graduate from high school, by which time they will have become accustomed to attending class eighteen hours a day and will be prepared to take on the twenty-two-hour college class day, which I now propose. There will probably be an immediate objection here: what about the poor teachers? This problem is quite easily taken care of, however, by using shifts of teachers until the first few crops of twenty-two-hour day education majors graduate and can assume full teaching days.

Now I will briefly outline the organization of this proposed system. There will be no difficulty in determining when this lengthened day should begin since classes will go on around the clock, seven days a week. The extra two hours will be divided into three half-hour periods for meals and sanitation purposes, and one half-hour for bathing, dressing, writing letters to parents, *et cetera*. Meal periods will have to be cut short on Sundays, however, in order to allow a full hour for attending church services. Preparation for the services will begin at twelve o'clock Saturday night with the week's accumulation of chapel services, Christian Association programs and the like, continuing until eleven o'clock Sunday morning. The rest of the day would be devoted to continuous Activity Hours, of which the student would otherwise be deprived.

There is no allowance in this system for holidays, summer vacation included. The student will go right through until his graduation, a period of one hundred and eighteen days according to my calculations. Therefore, an entire college education will take approximately four months. Naturally, in such a tight schedule there will be no social life whatever, and no desire for it on the part of students since they will have known nothing of such a thing from the age of six. As for students who become ill, perhaps some sort of isolation booth could be placed in each classroom so that an absence would not be necessary.

Not knowing anything about the setting-up of courses and academic standards, I will not attempt to offer any suggestions along those lines. The administration could work out details such as what shift each professor would be on, and whether the students or the teachers would move from one classroom to another.

Although this is a very brief and undetailed resume of my plan, I believe that the advantages of the system are obvious.

First, children will be brought up to have a seriousness of purpose. Never having known leisure or frivolity, they will enter college with no thought in mind other than to buckle down and get an education.

Secondly, the enormous saving in time will enable countless more people to be graduated each year than is now possible. Furthermore, parents will have to pay for only four months of college rather than four years, and this will allow boys and girls of low financial status to acquire an education.

Thirdly, the present dormitories will serve for classrooms, thus cutting down on the expenses of the college and making it possible for enrollment to be greatly increased. The money gained in this way could be used to hire more teachers and thereby shorten their shifts.

Fourthly, the national economy will be greatly aided by the tremendous output of college graduates who are prepared and qualified to work a twenty-two-hour day in their various occupations. The boost in industry and commerce will no doubt be incredible.

Fifthly, and most important, faculty members everywhere will be unshaken in their self-esteem and will have no chance to lose faith in their ability to make learning a fascinating adventure.

I declare in all honesty that my motive in proposing this plan is strictly for the betterment of humanity, as I am too old and far-advanced in my education to profit by it.

¹Swift, Jonathan, *A Modest Proposal*, p. 776.

²*Ibid.*

To a “Fellow UnEngagEd”

ALITA WHITE

Oh, my longing just now's
not for Love,
or for Passion abstract
and obscure;
I've considered the joys
of th'above,
and without them I think
we'll endure.

Oh, but there is one ques-
tion I fancy
on my pedestal pure
and demure:
Do you think that our Di
and our Nancy—
are they crawling around
in the sewer?

Do you think that our Do-
ris and Mabel
are really assur-
edly sure?
Oh, their rings are quite spar-
kly and able
to make Us even fall
for the lure . . .

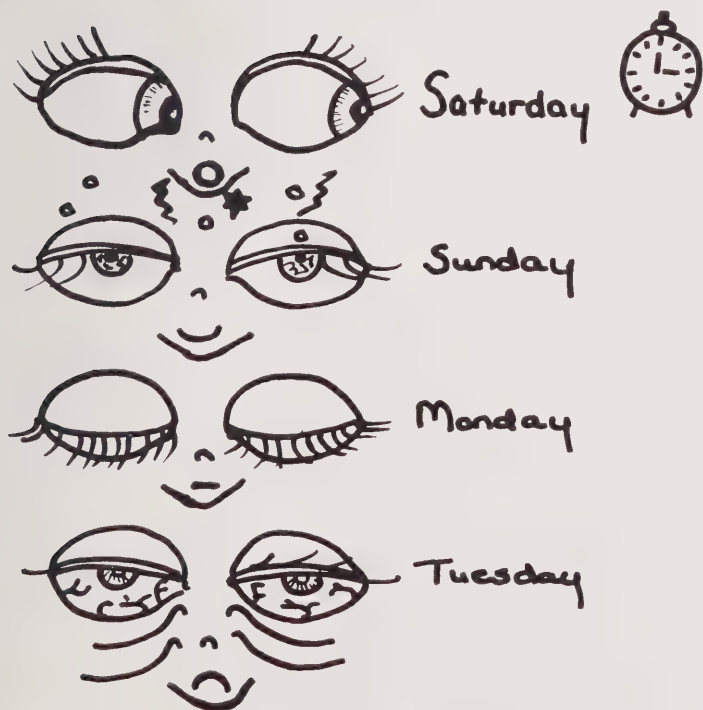
But with Pats gone, our num-
ber is fewer
and I wonder, as you
do my dear,
if for LoveAndRomance
there's no cure.
Shall we dunk our sour grapes
in our beer?

Poem

AMELIA ALEXANDER

Silently
the moon pours white-gold beams
on leafy branches,
through them drips her benediction
on our love.

Free Cut



Poem

SUZANNE CARRUTHERS

It rained. And the trembling skies,
The thunderous clouds, your eyes,
Shone through my lone tears. I look . . .
I know you are gone. You took
Too much when you went away:
My love, passion full, my day
Of life. Now the night comes on,
Dark clouds lean against the dawn
In bulk, and in awful rest.
My heart pounds against my chest
Heavy, and with salted wounds
Like rain on the saddened grounds.

Poem

ALITA WHITE

How or why I leave you—no, my
thoughts dare not beyond this hour.
Hearts withdraw in dread, take flight with
understanding's weakened pow'r—
here, when in your very presence
I should most expect contentment!
Hearing words of love, I faithless
shudder, yet unsatisfied.
Only love's tight clasp upon the
soul gives promise; I deride,
time and absence rust the clasp and
see the spirit love go free as

Now I busy-blind my senses
to a world devoid of you.
Still the smiling sun reminds me,
moonless nights with fear imbue
strange and solemn ghosts around me
suffer dreams of flight, disaster!
Saddened summers wide the breach of
years and leave me tearless wet.
Sullen, white with waning hope, though
no more phantom-prodded, yet
waking, whisp'ring woeful prayer
heard nor heeded never, till

Love, oh yes, I know you now as
mem'ry only, maimed by loss.
Leering dread, immersed in hope, and
faithfulness, hard-born and tossed,
loose the clasp upon my heart, and
lease the gentle spirit's dwelling!
Leave me silent, cold, and bare of
outlived hope and fruitless wait.
Suffer me a final dream, and
granting a more welcome fate—
Shall these faded eyes in death grow
lustrous, gleam in recognition?

Poem

MARY STENHOUSE

You gave me music never heard,
To fill the heart as aging wine;
Yet womanwise, I sought a word,
To make our moments ever mine.

In openness I did not plead;
With subtlety I sought a word.
And when at length you did not heed,
I turned, I hurt you for a word.

And now you give me words, it's true,
The very words I sought before;
Yet having words, I have not you.
My heart cries out for something more.

Forgive my seeking, womanwise,
Words multi-hued as skies above,
For yours are the unspoken ties.
Oh, give again your silent love!

Salvation

HARRIET HOUSTON

Touch me
Hold tightly to my hand
That I revolve not
Senselessly through space
Spurning all creation

Touch me
Hold tightly to my heart
Linking me with mankind
That I drift not
Downward and away

The masses stare
The multitudes gaze
Life falters
Death threatens
Onward travels time
I safely stand free from such
Bearing the aegis of your touch
Salvation divine



PAINTING

Elizabeth Sproul

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

LAURA P. DAVIS

Thomas S. Eliot's first published poem of importance was "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—a dramatic monologue which portrays a person who tells a story and who, in so doing, reveals his character. While the epigraph is not an essential part of this poem, it is not to be overlooked; for it combines features of levity and seriousness and conveys hints of the significance which surrounds the meanings of the poem. Taken from Dante's "Inferno," the epigraph reads: "If I could believe that my answer might be to a person who should ever return to the world, this flame would stand without more quiverings; but inasmuch as, if I hear the truth, never from this depth did any living man return, without fear of infamy I answer thee." With the title, this short piece of writing prepares the reader for the situations and the experiences of the story which follow.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" the reader is at once confronted with the love song of a peculiar character whose very name suggests the qualities he manifests; Prufrock is a middle-aged man, inclined to be over-sensitive and timid, yearning and procrastinating, fearful that life has swept him by and yet somehow resigned to the fact. His character is very similar to that of Hamlet—Prufrock is a man apparently betrayed by his possession of both intellect and imagination. Being very much a creature in a world of drawing rooms, Prufrock yet feels a vague dissatisfaction with such a world.

Since the epigraph speaks of a character who has not chosen to reveal himself, the reader wonders if this person is related to Prufrock in any way. Are the two people merely in a similar situation, or are they alike in personalities? The opening lines of the poem introduce a "you and I" at a point in which the subjective "I" is giving in to an even more subjective "you" by agreeing to go somewhere. It is clear that the speaker is "I," but who is the "you" addressed? Although the title suggests a lady, the epigraph suggests a scene out of the realm of the world in which two people of the same sex are talking together.

It is evening and tea time; Prufrock is in a drawing-room belonging to one of the members of his society, and he is among the teacups, the cakes, and the coffee spoons: or a tete-a-tete with a lady in the midst of flowers and candlelight. Filled with carefully caught regrets and embarrassing overtones, the conversation is one of intimacy. "It is as though Prufrock had just stepped inside after wandering alone in the streets; here are the people of whose criticism he is most afraid, and yet he can see their shallowness."¹ Although the evening is as any other in Prufrock's life, it has an unusual quality—it is "spread out against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table." Twilight is caught, but the image becomes also the world of dusk in its symbols of the realm between life and death; for there enters into the imagination of the reader the reflection of a sick world with the atmosphere of the operating-room. In one sense Prufrock is performing an operation, but the patient

is himself as well as the world. Since the metaphor suggests the desire of inactivity to the point of forced release from pain as it fills the imagination with hints of disease and helplessness, the sunset is not peaceful. Into the mind of the speaker, the metaphor projects the thoughts that he is in conflict with the question of love. Through this imagery the reader realizes that Prufrock is seeking an answer to an important question—the "overwhelming question" which the "you" must not dare ask about but can discover only through making a trip with the man.

In order to reach Prufrock's proper world, this "you" is required to journey through a slum section of sinister streets. "This provides the setting for Prufrock's world, a contrast that becomes more important later in the poem, but which for the moment points up the triviality of the conversation of the women upon whom the reader suddenly comes."² The reader must not be misled in thinking that the subject is trivial, for Michelangelo was an artist of epic grandeur; on the contrary, the women are trivial for the subject since such a figure would hardly be at home with the women of Prufrock's world.

As Prufrock and the "you" travel through this cheap section of town, the dirty streets alone suggest the question which Prufrock longs to ask as well as the urge which led him to select this route. "The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes," the dinginess, and the stale smells are the creeping, choking atmosphere of a spiritual decay; the "one-night cheap hotels" are a reminder of the homelessness of the human soul rather than a reminder of the acceptable life of the big city. And the expression of a negative helplessness which is closing around the world is found in the "lonely men in shirtsleeves leaning out of windows." The image of the fog's seeming to be a cat is another reflection of Prufrock's mental state: desire which is filled with inertia. While the cat suggests laziness, Prufrock finds somnolence in the evening, an evening suggesting that there will be plenty of time for a more suggested activity. Time associates itself with escape, an escape which will be good for the present moment. At this point the reader is confronted with Prufrock's mental block, a block which is emphasized by his refusal to recognize the important question. While the urge belongs to the "you," the block belongs to the "I." The destination being the room where the women talk quietly of the great artist, Prufrock finds that his tension is mounting as the time grows shorter for him to "begin."

What is this time for? Perhaps it is to prepare him to meet an ordeal and to encounter faces that must be encountered. "His self-conscious accommodation to the social scene suggests the same thing in others. This action is given an incongruous violence by the phrase 'to murder and create'—there will be time for the two of them at least before the event."³ Arising in Prufrock's imagination, images of destruction and punishment are turned against the world and against himself. For the first time there will be a moment for some great decision to settle the "overwhelming question," and there will be time for "visions and revisions." "The word *vision* here is important, for it implies the possibility of some fundamental insight, a flash of truth, a glimpse of beauty. But this word is played off against *revision*, with its implications of the calculated change."⁴ Relating the precise time for the question, the first section of the poem tells the reader that it is tea time. As the destination is again recalled, it becomes almost the haunting refrain which is the chief thought in the mind of Prufrock.

In the beginning of the next section of the poem, Prufrock finds comfort in the still remaining time; his tension, however, increases as he raises the question of daring which only particularizes his fear. Through the vision of descending the stair, Prufrock is exposed in his one great weakness—the self-conscious disabilities attributed to his middle age. He is balding, and his arms no longer boast of muscles. Because of these facts, his fear gains proportion, mounting to the image of daring to “disturb the universe.” He holds the more desperately, therefore, to the reassurance of time. In the fleeting moments of a minute he finds courage to speak of decisions; before, he could only mention indecisions.

In a projection of this psychological drama, the reader will be aware that Prufrock is drawing closer to “the room”; for now he begins to recall the things which he has known. But what is the function of a statement so unusual as “I have measured out my life with coffee spoons”? It is brilliantly ironic; and, if taken literally, it would be supposed that Prufrock had measured out his life in little dribbles. But it may well contain another meaning; namely, that he has spent his life in just such an environment as this drawing room which has been mentioned. As Prufrock nears the climax, the images progress in intimacy: eyes, voices, arms. The eyes now fix him in a formulated phrase; they classify him like an insect pinned and wiggling on the wall. To try to deny his class, to break with his past, and to spit out all the butt-ends of his days are now Prufrock’s problems.

Just as Prufrock begins to itemize the arms with which he has been familiar, he is distracted by an erotic symbol—the parenthetical observation “downed with light brown hair.” Is this merely an observation, or does it indicate something about the man? “The fact that the observation of the ‘real’ arms is put in contrast with the ‘romantic arms,’ modifies the attraction: against the attraction there is a hint of repulsion, a hint of neurotic repudiation of the real, the physical.”⁵ Confronting such a situation, how should Prufrock begin? This question also holds the answer—this is the climax, for Prufrock will never begin.

The following lines find Prufrock remembering the streets of the slums through which he and “you” have passed. He also remembers seeing the lonely men, discards of society. Why do these recollections come now into Prufrock’s mind? Because he, too, is a lonely man, a discard. He suddenly feels an identification with these men. His condition is, however, in contrast to theirs. While their loneliness results from poverty and sickness, his results from some kind of repudiation of life. Earnestly has he tried to begin, but he cannot since his psychological block has captured him completely. Pitifully he concludes by commenting on what he should have been—“a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floors of silent seas.” In this image Prufrock sees the claws as able to grasp what they desire without having to be pulled apart with conflicts; and because it has its purpose, Prufrock would prefer this life of the claws, no matter how low or rudimentary it may be.

Following the climax of the poem, the somnolent imagery is once again felt with a marked reduction of tension. Finding himself back in terms of the tea party, Prufrock sees the evening sleeping “here beside you and me”—both of whom, it is now clear, are Prufrock; for the lady is always “one” and never “you.” “Now a series of heroic parallels is begun in self-justification which become mock heroic.”⁶ Reflecting upon the past events, Prufrock rationalizes his failure by saying, “Would it have been worth it?” He has seen his reputation picked to pieces—his head, slightly bald, carried

in on a platter like that of John the Baptist. This reference to the prophet carries an allusion to the love story, for John’s death was demanded by a woman. Prufrock also rejected love, but not because he had a burning message and faith. “He is merely a product of his world, where even Death is a kind of footman who holds the coat and snickers at the slightly ridiculous guest. Even Prufrock’s death will lack dignity and meaning.”⁷

Would it have been worth it after all? Would it have been worth it to have “squeezed the universe into a ball”? To Prufrock the universe would have been rolled toward the “overwhelming question.” Not only would the personal relationship be involved, but also the meaning of life and the world. Now Prufrock feels like a dead man, wondering whether or not he has the courage to speak of the things which he knows. To return from such a state would be to awaken to a drab existence. In relationship with the raising of Lazarus, to tell all would be to report what is it to be dead; in connection with the beggar Lazarus, to tell all would mean to utter the warnings of repentance. This conflict is settled by Prufrock’s fear of being misunderstood by the lady, thus exposing himself to ridicule. Would it have been worth it? His greatest dread, public revelation of his sensitivity, is put into a vivid form by the vision of the magic lantern.

Now the poem turns to a note of decision, marking the resumption of Prufrock’s domestic role. He is not Prince Hamlet. Although Hamlet suffered doubt and despair, brought an overwhelming question to Ophelia, and postponed his decisive action, he struggled grandly and passionately with his conflict and did not become a victim of neurotic shrinking and shyness. Unlike the world of Prufrock, Hamlet’s world was evil and violent. “Prufrock, with sad self-irony, sees all this and knows that if he corresponds to any character in the play, it is to the empty, old Polonius; the sycophantic Rosenkranz; or the silly, floppish Osric.”⁸ His prudent character finds safety in self-mockery, “I grow old . . . I grow old,” while he puts forth the unromantic character to which he resigns himself, deciding, however, to be a little more sportive in dress. There shall be no more “overwhelming question” for him, only such decisions as whether or not to hide his baldness or to eat a peach.

At the close of the poem the reader sees Prufrock as an aging man on the beach, longingly watching the girls who have no time to give him any attention. Suddenly his world is transformed into one of beauty, in contrast to the scenes of which he has been a part. In the erotic imagery of the mermaids, the hair-likeness of the waves recalls the down on the lady’s arms. “This watery, floating imagery involves the relaxation of all effort, offers a submerged fulfillment. It is ended when ‘human voices wake us and we drown’—with the intrusion of reality which drowns the inner life, the ‘us’ in Prufrock.”⁹ If this be a sublimation of the amorous man, it is the release of the timid man from the polite society which overwhelms him. But reality returns, and the conflicting self is submerged again rather than resolved.

¹ Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, (New York, 1938) p. 591.

² Cleanth Brooks, *Understanding Poetry*, (New York, 1951) p. 434.

³ George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide To T. S. Eliot*, (New York, 1953), p. 61.

⁴ Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

⁶ Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁷ Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

⁹ Marie Baldridge, “Some Psychological Patterns in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot,” *Psychoanalysis*, (Fall, 1954), p. 19.

Ode To Practice T-ching

ANONYMOUS

l . . . o . . . o . . . k.
s . . . e . . . e.

look
and
see.
look and see!
look 'n' see! !

r . . . u . . . n.
run.
run run
run run run!
run look see!
see! run! look!
where? over here?
no, it's 2 o'clock.

run me no runs
look me no looks
it's 2 o'clock.
i can run
you can run
Spot can run—
but out, you Spot!
it's 2 o'clock.

Ladies' Apparel



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"No Man is an Island"

ELIZABETH CRONQUIST

What manner of man conceived of and wrote such a statement? Surely he was neither capable of deep perception nor sensitive to the basic truths of human nature, for these truths indicate that man is an island, a being quite unlike any other. Yet this theory that no man can stand alone is accepted in faith by thousands of people. It is representative of the trend of the twentieth century toward moral and spiritual decay.

In this age of advanced scientific discovery and increasing insecurity, people are afraid to be alone. Kings and paupers, the weak men, the powerful men, women, teens, and children demand and seek constant companionship. Their frantic never-ending search is the very cause of their insecurity. Not finding comfort or satisfaction in their own resources, they turn from their unrest to liquor, from love to lewdness, from good music and literature to the worthless compositions of other confused moderns.

There occurs a strong joiner sentiment. There are countless organizations one can join—some of which undoubtedly work for the good of others, but it would seem that many persons seek out these organizations merely to fill in leisure time and become known as active citizens. The more civic and social groups one belongs to, the more impressive one's epitaph or marriage announcement will appear.

What a tragedy that so few people know the joy of being alone . . . the aloneness of hearing rain on a roof, or walking through leaves on a fall afternoon, of losing oneself in a novel. Those who constantly "seek" will never find themselves, for it is in solitude that one is able to do soul searching; and it is in quiet and meditation that one discovers the purposes and principles by which to live.

"Aloneness must be avoided" cry our contemporaries. Free thought that results from silent concentration and contemplation is considered subversive—the thinker is looked upon as dangerous—governments are fast becoming more socialistic.

Where will they end, those masses of people seeking distraction because they fear aloneness? They blindly pass by the most abused of life's great gifts, the liberty of solitude. How unfortunate and ignorant they are, for they are unaware that only by being alone can one be true to self and partake of the most enduring companionship of all. They will have outward company, but their souls will be vacant shells where God is not allowed to visit.

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